United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property
   historic name White Horse Ranch
   other names/site number NEHBS # BD00-68

2. Location
   street & number Rt. 1, Box 20
   city, town Naper
   state Nebraska code NE county Boyd code 015 zip code 68755

3. Classification
   Ownership of Property
   X private
   [ ] public-local
   [ ] public-State
   [ ] public-Federal

   Category of Property
   [ ] building(s)
   X district
   [ ] site
   [ ] structure
   [ ] object

   Number of Resources within Property
   Contributing Noncontributing
   buildings sites structures objects
   7 3 3 3 Total

   Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.
   Date
   Nebraska State Historical Society
   State or Federal agency and bureau

   In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.
   Signature of commenting or other official
   Date
   State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification
   I, hereby certify that this property is:
   [ ] entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
   [ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
   [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
   [ ] removed from the National Register.
   [ ] other, (explain:)
   Date of Action
   Signature of the Keeper
6. Function or Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)</th>
<th>Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce/Trade: business</td>
<td>Vacant/Not in Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture: animal facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Culture: auditorium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce/Trade: department store</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

- No Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: Concrete
- walls: Wood: weatherboard
- roof: Asphalt
- other: Metal

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The White Horse Ranch covers approximately 2,400 acres of beautiful rolling sand hills along the Niobrara River in Boyd County, Nebraska. The ranch was founded by Cal and Ruth Thompson in 1936. This nomination comprises a forty acre tract of land that contains all of the representative buildings, including the ranch office, general store, two barns, two sheds and the ranch house, all of which were built in the 1890s as part of an earlier ranch operation. Structural and historical integrity is good for all seven contributing buildings. Restoration plans by the current owner are now underway.

The remaining seven contributing buildings (see Sketch Map 1-7) all date from the period of the White Horse Ranch’s significance, its founding in 1936.

1. The old Wright Ranch cream station was used as the office (photos 2, 3) of the White Horse Ranch. A clapboard, one and one-half story building with concrete block foundation and asphalt shingle gable roof, Caleb Thompson died here in 1963. Its principal distinguishing characteristic is a covered stairway to the upper level in the rear. The office, approximately 10’ x 14’, has a storm cellar with outside access only.

2. The horsebarn (photos 6, 7), with shiplap wood siding, has a concrete foundation and standing seam tin gambrel roof. The barn is 62’ wide and 48’ long, with 16’ x 48’ shed roof additions on either side. There are eleven horse stalls and a feed room in the center section of the barn. The south addition is divided into three large stalls; the north addition has two storage rooms. The 30’ x 48’ loft was used for hay storage.

3. The 20’ x 24’ wood clapboard house (photo 1) has one story and a wood shingle hip roof with dormers in the ends of the attic. There is a closed-in porch measuring 10’ x 24’ on the south side of the house. There are two bedrooms in the north corners, a dining room, and a small kitchen.

[X] See continuation sheet
4. The store building (photo 4) has a corrugated iron gable roof and a concrete block foundation. The wood frame building has been sheathed with brick patterned, pressed tin panels. The store, facing south, has a symmetrical false front with a door and four windows. There is a door in the back on the east side. The store building is 24' wide x 36' long.

5. The long barn (photos 8, 9) was originally built for cattle. Caleb and Ruth Thompson converted it into a recreation hall. Cal used the north exterior of it to paint a folkart mural of scenery around the White Horse Ranch, including the Niobrara River and the ranch itself. The mural, 110' long, has been restored. Cal also painted a huge horseshoe over the east entrance for good luck to the performers.

This building was used for public gatherings and meetings, including amateur theatricals, and other entertainment for the huge crowds such as music and dances. The 100' long building is 22' wide. A 12' wide stage runs along the east end. There is a balcony area at the west end, 25' deep, which is a remnant of the original hayloft removed by the Thompsons. Public access was through a sliding door in the center of the long south wall. Of clapboard-sheathed frame construction, it has an asphalt shingle roof gable and concrete foundation.

6. East of the store stands a clapboard sided frame 24' x 36' building (photo 5) with gable roof and a lean-to shed measuring 12' x 24' on the back. This was a tack and harness shed and was later used as a garage. There is a sliding door and a set of double doors on the east side.

7. Further east is a clapboard sided frame 16' x 24' building (photo 7) with gable roof, and one set of double doors in one end. This was a wagon shed and garage.

Other features:

Northeast of the long barn were a circus ring and other equine training apparatuses.
Five quonset huts used as dormitories and a dining hall or cafe were built in the 1940’s along a small natural drainage about a hundred yards southwest of the long barn. There was also a clear level parking area for visitors and for horse trailers. One of the "bunk houses" is still extant (8). It measures 12’ x 28’ with a 4’ x 6’ protected entryway. The cafe also survives (9). It is 100’ long and 19’ wide, including two shedroof additions on either end.

A two story stucco-covered frame house for a caretaker was begun ten years ago to the southeast of the ranch complex (10). It is incomplete and uninhabited at this time.

The contributing buildings (1 through 7 above), vacant since Cal Thompson’s death, are now being restored and maintained by local citizens, including several women who participated in the ranch’s riding school and horse troupe.
The White Horse Ranch is of national significance in the area of agriculture (Criterion A) as the place of origin of a registered breed of horse, the American Albino or American White. This is apparently the only registered breed of livestock developed exclusively in Nebraska.

The date of the founding of the White Horse Ranch, 1936, coincides with the creation of the American Albino registry. Both were the result of the efforts of Caleb or Cal Thompson and his second wife, Ruth, who developed the breed with Cal’s brother, Hudson, on their ranches near Merriman between 1917 and 1936.

Caleb or Cal Thompson, born at West Point, Nebraska, in 1892, showed a strong early interest in purebred animals and raising registered livestock. In 1917, he and his twin brother, Hudson, purchased "Old King," an outstanding pure white stallion with pink skin but normal eyes, from a doctor in Illinois. The albino, of mixed Arabian and Morgan ancestry, was a splendid showhorse and was used as a stud. Cal began keeping some track of Old King’s progeny. In six generations, the Thompson brothers had a pure strain of albino horses without pink eyes.

After the death of his wife, Cal Thompson married Ruth Hackenberg in 1934 and they moved from Merriman to Naper in 1936 where they acquired an existing ranch along the Niobrara. They founded the American Albino Horse Club, later called the American Albino Association, and developed the White Horse Ranch as a working ranch and showplace along the albino theme. All livestock and pets, including dogs, cats, canaries, cattle, peafowl, geese, ducks, and horses, were white. All riding equipment, vehicles, and buildings were the same color.
Cal and Ruth began a formal registry of Old King’s descendants in 1936. The first registered horse, Snowchief II, was mounted after death and is on exhibit in the Stuart, Nebraska museum. The Thompsons organized a girls’ riding school and special scholarships were provided for the underprivileged. In 1938, the Thompsons organized the “White Horse Troupe” which toured America and performed at Shrine circuses, carnivals, and rodeos for 25 years. In 1946, over 10,000 spectators viewed the troupe at the ranch in one day. Two Warner Brothers short films about the Ranch and the breed were made in 1946 and 1951.

In 1963, Mr. Thompson died. His widow moved to Oregon, taking the American Albino registry with her. The animals were dispersed but Mrs. Thompson retained ownership of the ranch. In 1985, the official breeding records were returned to Naper. Some 4,000 horses have been registered to date, and there is now an international American Albino association.

The “American White” horse color breed, as it is called today, has been made famous as the Lone Ranger’s horse (the White Horse Ranch provided ten of them) and as the Mustang emblem used by Ford Motor Company. Today the White Horse Ranch is still owned by Ruth Thompson. The buildings, vacant since Cal Thompson’s death, are now being restored by interested local citizens, including several women who participated in the ranch’s riding school and horse troupe. The White Horse Ranch legacy also continues in the form of the Texas White Horse Troupe of registered American Albino horses which travel and perform nationally.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _______________________
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _______________________

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 40 acres

UTM References

A Zone Easting Northing

B Zone Easting Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

C Zone Easting Northing

D Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The White Horse Ranch Headquarters encompasses 40 acres, the Northwest 1/4 of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 35 of Township 34 North, Range 15 West, Boyd County, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification

This is the developed area of the ranch as opposed to the remaining 2,800 acres, more or less, which is unaltered grazing land. In these buildings all public involvement occurred and all records pertaining to this breed of horses were maintained.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James A. Hanson, Director
date December 30, 1989
organization Nebraska State Historical Society
telephone 402-471-4745
street & number 1500 R Street
state Nebraska
city or town Lincoln
zip code 68508

American Albino Association, Inc. *To Ride a White Horse.* Crabtree, Oregon; no date (circa 1967).


Nebraska Press Association, *Who's Who in Nebraska.* Lincoln, Nebraska; 1940.

Photo 1 of 9
Looking NE showing S & W facades of house
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:8a)

Photo 2 of 9
Looking N showing S (main) façade of office bldg
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:11a)

Photo 3 of 9
Looking NE showing S & W facades of office bldg
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:10a)
Looking NW showing S & E facades of store bldg
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:14a)

Looking NW showing S & E facades of tack & harness shed
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:15a)

Looking NNW showing S & E facades of horse barn
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:16a)
Photo 7 of 9
Looking NW showing horse barn & wagon shed
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:19a)

Photo 8 of 9
Looking SW showing N & E facades of long barn
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:18a)

Photo 9 of 9
Looking SE showing N & W facades of long barn
Photo by John Kay, Oct 1987 (NSHS 8710/10:12a)